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~~TOP SECRET~~

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum

THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 0600
18 February 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
FURTHER DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION
CONTAINED HEREIN IS **NOT** AUTHORIZED

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
18 February 1965

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam as of 0600 EST

Communist Military Developments

1. No unusual movement of Chinese Communist or North Vietnamese armed forces has been detected in the past 24 hours.

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3. Hanoi has claimed that it damaged two of four South Vietnamese commando boats early on 17 February in waters off Nghe An Province. Hanoi called the incident a "new, extremely serious act of provocation by the US." MACV reports that a raid was carried out successfully in this area, but that no further details are available at this time.

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Communist Political Developments

5. A 15 February conversation between Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin and Ambassador Thompson provides a fairly accurate reflection of Moscow's current attitude toward the US. Dobrynin clearly indicated that the Soviet leaders were relating US actions in bombing

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North Vietnam to Soviet Premier Kosygin's visit to Hanoi. The Soviet Ambassador's remarks underscored the concern with which Moscow views the present situation and reflected the USSR's attempt to influence US policy on Vietnam. Dobrynin emphasized that bilateral relations could be seriously affected if the US continued on its present course. He went to some pains in an effort to determine what the future course of US actions was likely to be. Although the Soviet Ambassador made no attempt to propose any initiative on the question of a negotiated settlement, he referred to earlier Indian and French proposals, as well as U Thant's appeal.

6. Although the USSR has given wide publicity to various calls for a political settlement, it has taken no action on its own in part to avoid antagonizing the Asian Communists as well as to play for time while it probes for a clearer reading of US intentions. The marked hardening in the Soviet position on Vietnam was reflected in a stormy conversation on 15 February between Deputy Foreign Minister Zorin and Canadian Ambassador Ford. Zorin bluntly asserted that "there was no basis or excuse" for US bombing of the DRV. He flatly maintained that "we have declared that we will help the DRV and we will not retreat from the threats of the US." Zorin's effort also appears to represent an ill-disguised attempt to prod the Canadians into bringing their influence to bear on US policy toward Vietnam.

7. Significant Communist propaganda on the Vietnam crisis has slackened off, a further reflection of the relative lull in military activity. The Soviet press is attempting to convey the impression that the US is becoming increasingly isolated on the Vietnam scene. Peiping continues its effort and along with North Vietnam charges that ICC teams have abetted US "acts of aggression" and called DRV demands for their removal "fully justified."

Viet Cong Activity

8. [redacted] a slight drop-off in total Viet Cong activity in the past few days. However, there are still unconfirmed press reports that a large Viet Cong force--possibly of battalion size--

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attacked government posts in the delta province of Dinh Tuong, about 32 miles southwest of Saigon. 25X1

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Political Developments in South Vietnam

9. General Khanh and the Armed Forces Council have officially established a 20-man military-civilian National Legislative Council. The Council is intended to serve as an interim legislature, with an elected assembly apparently relegated to the indefinite future. The new Council is headed by a general considered to be at odds with Khanh in the past. In his first policy statement since the installation of a new civilian government, Premier Quat has indicated that he considers his immediate primary mission one of trying to heal the breach among various political and religious factions.

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